A MYSTERY.

When we take an observation of what's
going on around
We often think that wonders never cease.
For instance, there are people who apparently are crowned
To live a life of luxury and ease.
If their accounts were balanced less than
nothing would remain,
And prison fare they probably would
chew,
And yet they set the fashions and we follow
in their train.
We don't see how they do it—but they do.

Their homes are simply palaces of elegance
and art;
Their costly entertainments are a dream;
They lead in gay society and are considered smart,
And pass for greater lions than they seem.
While better folks are fasting they are
feasting night and day,
And pleasure is the object they pursue;
And yet if forced to settle what they owe
they couldn't pay.
We don't see how they do it—but they do.

There are the politicians who an easy way
have found
Of living without doing any work.
Arrayed in gaudy garments they are swaggering around
As lazy and as saucy as a Turk.
Although they are the enemies of everything that's right,
Although we know they rule and rob us,
too,
They make themselves our bosses and we
cheer them with delight.
We don't see how they do it—but they do.

There are the stock promoters, who are
working night and day,
In laying gold on other people's shelves.
They kindly take your money and invest
it in a way
To realize a fortune—for themselves.
Their schemes are most magnificent—the
profits are so great,
They only grant their favors to a few.
A million dollar company from nothing they
create.
We don't see how they do it—but they do.

There are the busy merchants who are always—so they say—
A selling things at less than what they
cost.
They all have bargain counters where they
give the goods away
To crowds of crazy shoppers they exhaust.
Although they're losing money on each article they sell,
According to their advertisements true,
They never look discouraged and are always very well.
We don't see how they do it—but they do.

There are the foolish people who compel
themselves to bear
A burden growing heavier each day,
In keeping up appearances for those who
never care
They throw their peace and comfort all
away.
Their awful strain and worry is, in spite of
all their guile,
Quite evident to everybody's view,
And yet with all their troubles they in
public wear a smile.
We don't see how they do it—but they do.
—H. C. Dodge, in Chicago Daily Sun.

A Knave of Conscience

By FRANCIS LYNDE.

(Copyright 1900, by Francis Lynde.)

CHAPTER XIX.—CONTINUED.

Griffin strolled listlessly with the crowd, and presently found himself in front of the new playhouse. It was early, but the "first-nighters" were already thronging the vestibule. He stood aside to look on, honestly wishing he could rid himself of the Bayou bank mystery long enough to go in and enjoy himself with the pleasurers.

Now it chanced that in stepping back out of the sidewalk throng he got in the way of the carriage contingent, and a moment later a voice at his elbow said:

"Excuse me; will you let the ladies alight?"

Griffin gave place, and saw a young man with a clean-cut, eager face hand two young women from the carriage. They were followed by an elderly gentleman with eye-glasses; and on the sidewalk the group fell into pairs. Griffin could not well help hearing the colloquy.

"I think the others will be here in a few minutes, doctor. Shall we wait and go in with them?"

Thus spoke the young man with the clean-cut face; and at the older man's negative he spoke again.

"Just as you please. If you will take Miss Raymer and let me take Miss Farnham, that will divide us equally. The seats are all near together, but I couldn't get them all in the same row."

Griffin stared hard at the speaker's companion as the parti carre moved away.

"So that is Miss Charlotte Farnham, and my last chance," he mused, turning back toward the hotel. "There is one grain of comfort in it for me; if her face doesn't belie her, she will tell me the truth. By Jove! but that young lawyer, or whatever he is, has an eye for good looks. I've never seen her equal in all my ups and downs, and that's saying a good deal."

So he went his way to the St. James and presently to bed, without so much as suspecting that he had actually touched elbows with the man whose identity he was vainly trying to establish.

CHAPTER XX.

It was the early morning of a flawless northern summer's day, and the lake sparkled like a sheet of hammered silver under the windows of the Farnham sitting-room. The shades had been drawn when Griffin entered, but he had taken the liberty to run them up before Miss Farnham came in. And since he was finding it necessary to read much between the lines of her guarded answers to his questions, he did not regret the precaution.

"You say he admitted his guilt to you, Miss Farnham, before the boat reached St. Louis?"

"Yes."

"May I ask how he came to do that?"

"I—must I answer that?" she faltered.

"I need hardly say there is no 'must' about it. I am an officer of the law, and I am anxious to find the man. I am sure you will tell me everything which might help me, and I don't ask to know more."

She considered it for a moment, and then took counsel of frankness.

"He admitted it because I asked him."

Griffin smiled, and then explained the smile.

"Pardon me," he said. "I was thinking that no one but a woman would ever have thought of doing such a thing as that. I fancy you surprised the admission out of him."

"No, I do not think I did. He admitted the fact very willingly, though he would not admit that it was wrong."

"Ah; that helps more than you might imagine. They have all been looking for a seasoned criminal, you know."

"He wasn't that," she said, with an air of conviction. "Apart from this one great wrong which he had done, he seemed to be a gentleman. It may seem incredible to you, but he fairly insisted upon my writing to Mr. Galbraith."

Griffin smiled again and nodded reassuringly. What she was telling him fitted in admirably with the only tenable theory he had formed; that the robber was no criminal; that he was only a monomaniac on the social side.

"And when he did that he doubtless asssured you that he would consider himself bound in honor not to take advantage of your frankness?"

"He did just that. How did you know?" she asked.

"I merely inferred it. And his parole was to expire at St. Louis?"

"It was—it did."

Griffin rose and found his hat.

"I am greatly obliged to you, Miss Farnham. I know you haven't found it easy to speak of this to a stranger."

While the identity of the man is still a mystery, you have helped more than you know. Good morning."

Griffin left the house, but instead of taking the street, he turned aside to stroll aimlessly along the lake shore, giving a new theory time to grow a little more definite. As has been said, his trade of man-catcher had come to be a passion with him, and he had genius where others labored only with talent. When the new theory had taken shape, it slipped into musing speech.

"She can't account for his little vagary, but I can. He simply fell in love with her at first sight, and because he was in love with her he made her do that which she knew to be right, at whatever cost to himself. That being the case, he is as sure to turn up here sooner or later as the sun is sure to rise to-morrow morning. Better than that, he may be here now. I'll camp down and study my environment for awhile. It's a pretty place, and I'll call it my vacation."

In a week's time Mr. Thomas Griffin had learned more about Wahaska than the ordinary summer visitor would have learned in a year's residence. He knew Jasper Grierson and his ambitions, and Jasper Grierson's daughter and hers. He knew all about the social teapot tempest, and could identify the adherents of each of the factions. He knew that Andrew Galbraith was a guest at the summer hotel on the point, and was soon able to draw his own conclusions touching the growing intimacy between Grierson and the New Orleans banker. The drawing of these conclusions cost the detective a trip to the pine-land region in the northern part of the state, and the information he sought and obtained had no bearing upon the bank robbery. Jasper Grierson held the reversion of some worthless pine land which he was trying to sell Andrew Galbraith; that was all.

But in another field Griffin sent his arrows of investigation nearer the target, and that without knowing it. He came to know all about the Raymers, the iron works company, and the reorganization of the same with one Kenneth Griswold for a partner. Probing a bit deeper into this, more to account for the oddity of a man like Griswold interesting himself in a business affair than for any other reason, the detective unearthed a thing which the prime movers in it were not bruiting abroad. Jasper Grierson had all but succeeded in smashing young Raymer's enterprise; would have smashed it but for Griswold's intervention. That was fact the first. And fact the second was this: That Jasper Grierson repulsed was not Jasper Grierson defeated. Having failed to smash Raymer, he was now trying to obliterate both Raymer and the new partner. To this end he was fashioning two weapons. The railway and all other work controlled by Grierson and those to whom he dictated was withdrawn from the reorganized iron works company. That was the weapon legal; the other was more deadly. In the height of the Raymer-Griswold prosperity a deputation of workingmen had waited upon the partners with demands which could not be met. And the alternative was a strike.

CHAPTER XXI.

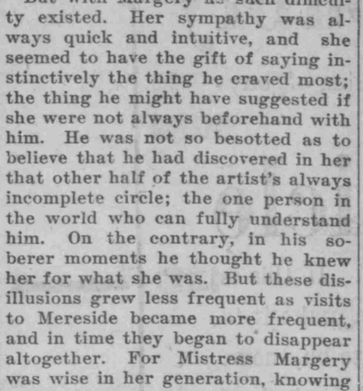
As Raymer had foretold Griswold's initial visit to the Grierson mansion on the lake's edge was but the beginning of an acquaintance which soon ripened into intimacy with the daughter of the house. For one thing, Griswold was always sure of his welcome at Mereside; and, for another, he was beginning to find the atmosphere of Margery's sitting-room the one environment where the remaking of the book could go on, and that Margery herself was the one person with whom he could discuss it with helpful freedom.

Do what he might he could not bring himself to the point of taking Charlotte into his confidence in the matter of the book. Though it was wholly undefined in his own mind, the barrier was the one which had been builded on the voyage up the river. The more he saw of Charlotte, and the more his love for her grew and throve, the less possible it became to look forward to a day when he might hope to tell her all with a fair probability of winning her approval of the thing he had done.

But with Margery no such difficulty existed. Her sympathy was always quick and intuitive, and she seemed to have the gift of saying instinctively the thing he craved most; the thing he might have suggested if she were not always beforehand with him. He was not so besotted as to believe that he had discovered in her that other half of the artist's always incomplete circle; the one person in the world who can fully understand him. On the contrary, in his soberer moments he thought he knew her for what she was. But these disillusions grew less frequent as visits to Mereside became more frequent, and in time they began to disappear altogether. For Mistress Margery was wise in her generation, knowing many things well and the heart of a man better than any.

But about the book, which was to settle once for all the vexed question of the rights of man, they did not always agree. As first conceived, the story was merely a vehicle loaded to overflowing with the socialistic protests of its author. But in the rewriting a new plot had been substituted; suggested, nay, even outlined, by Mistress Margery herself; and on the keel thus laid the venture built itself into something more like a novel and less like a preachment. Griswold saw the growth of it under his hand; saw the far-reaching possibilities of it; saw also that it was departing, despite his most strenuous efforts, from the course which he had pricked out on the chart of the former endeavor. In other words, the new book bade fair to grow into something which the publishers might accept and the public might buy and read, but of the rights of man there was coming to be less and less as the work progressed.

Being first of all an enthusiast, Griswold dug deeply for the cause of



"YOU HAVE HELPED MORE THAN YOU KNOW."

all this, and thought he found it in his new relation as an employer of labor. At first he had told himself that he would be a silent partner in the iron works, leaving all the activities to the practical Raymer; but he soon found this blankly impossible. And with personal interest and the shifting point of view came a change, gradual and almost insensible, in his attitude toward mankind in general and toward the workers in particular. So it came about that while he was writing a book, designed to overturn the existing social order, he was drifting slowly but surely into the ranks of the oppressors.

The first open confession of this change of creed came when the threat of a strike rose storm-cloud like on the iron works horizon. Raymer was for temporizing with the men, and for yielding something if need be; but this Griswold fought stoutly, growing more stubborn as the threatening cloud increased in size. If the men could not see for themselves what was for their best interests, they must be made to see.

But in reality it was Margery who was responsible for the major changes in the book. Caring nothing at all for the ethical question involved, she cared a great deal for the success of the author, and she was shrewd enough to arrive quickly at a double conclusion; that Griswold was well able to write a successful book; and that, left to himself, he would assuredly spoil it with his theories. So she labored faithfully to keep him in a broader road and not without a goodly measure of success.

"But, Margery,"—(they were well past the "Mr." and "Miss" by this time)—"I can't do that," he said one morning when they had been reworking the plot through one of the cozy sitting-room talks.

"Don't you see it begs the entire question of labor and capital?"

"I see that you can't help doing it unless you are deliberately false to your art," retorted the literary oracle.

"You have put these people on the stage, giving them certain characters, and they must go on and do the things that are consistent."

"Not if the consistent things are going to make the entire picture out of drawing."

She laughed. "How impossible a man can be," she rejoined, sweetly. "How many times must we go back to the original question. You must choose between saying it all and having nobody read it and saying a little and having everybody read it. I'm not saying anything against your theory—it's lovely. But unless you make it a good story, first, last and all the time, you will never get a hearing."

"Then I may as well give it up," Griswold confessed. "If I may not preach a little I have no excuse for saying anything at all."

"Oh, you may preach a little. But in this particular instance you must make Rathbone stern and inflexible, cruel, if need be. You needn't be afraid of its effect upon the girl. She will condone anything he may have to do—it's a way girls have."

He looked at her narrowly and then the film of abstraction came between.

"I wonder if you really mean that? Are women so ready to condone?"

Her laugh was mocking. "You make me blush for you," she said. "Isn't an author supposed to know more about us than we know about ourselves?"

"I don't know about the supposition. But the man who knows the heart of one woman—"

She stopped him with a little gesture of impatience.

"Tell me what it is you don't know and I'll turn traitor and betray my sex."

At that his gaze went beyond her again and he said: "I wonder if you would?"

"Try me and see."

He hesitated a moment, and then plunged into the depths of it.

"Then tell me this: If Rathbone should go on and do all the hard things you say his character calls for—things which Priscilla believes to be wrong—would she put her conscience aside and stand with him?"

Miss Grierson's reply was brief and very much to the point.

"A woman in love has no conscience. The man she loves has to furnish enough of that commodity for two."

Griswold winced. "What a merciless little cynic you are," he declared.

"It is true, and when you are saying true things where is the use of taking the roundabout way. I don't say the woman wouldn't be hurt. She would be, and the hurt might turn up afterward in a way to make the man sorry. But that has nothing to do with the fact that a woman's conscience can't hold its own against her love."

Griswold shook his head in deprecation. "I don't like to believe that. I'd like to believe that a man may go on making a good woman's conscience the touchstone by which his own conceptions of right and wrong may be corrected."

Margery laughed lightly. "And so you may, if you don't first go about to make the woman love you. But you can't eat your cake and have it too."

Griswold folded his manuscript and put it back in the envelope. Then he said what was in his mind.

"These are generalities, Margery. Would you be that loyal to the man you loved?"

Miss Grierson's shrug was barely perceptible.

"I like that," she said. "That is certainly personal enough." And then: "You mustn't endow me with a conscience."

"Why?"

"Because I think it was denied me in the general distribution of things good but unhappy. I am afraid the question I ask oftenest is whether I want the thing hard enough to try to get it."

"As if anyone would believe that of you!" said Griswold, at parting.

But afterward, when he came to think of it, the thin edge of belief found a crevice and would not be denied its entrance therein.

[To Be Continued.]

He Meant Well.

I was laid up in the cabin of a North Carolina mountaineer with a sprained ankle, and, though he would willingly have provided me with the best, the fare consisted of pones, fried squirrel and corn coffee every meal.

On the fifth day I must have let slip some sign that things were growing monotonous, for he looked over at me and said:

"Stranger, I reckoned to make a change in this yere fodder, but it didn't come about."

"Oh, the fodder is all right," I replied.

"But I don't skassly think it is, and I was gwine to make a change. Sorry to say I couldn't do it, but the dratted woodchuck got clean away!"—Philadelphia Press.

A Strange Hobby.

The principal hobby of the ex-queen regent of Spain is collecting of playing cards. She possesses a large number of curious packs, many of which have no little historical interest. One set, made of ivory, is believed to have belonged to Prince Eugene, who fought with the great Duke of Marlborough, and to have accompanied him in all his campaigns. Queen Christina also owns some exceedingly rare cards of Egyptian, Arabian, French and Spanish manufacture.—N. Y. Sun.

Wise Precaution.

"It is always advisable to know what business a man is in when he proposes marriage to you," said the blond.

"Why so?" asked the brunette.

"A man once gave me an engagement ring and, of course, I was a little curious to know what it had cost.

"Naturally."

"Well, I went to a jeweler's to inquire what was the value, and I found the man who gave me the token behind the counter."—Yonkers Statesman.